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and the carcass. Additionally, a fiber-reinforced elastomeric intermediate layer is placed between the belt structure and the tread band. Methods for manufacturing the pneumatic tire are also disclosed.

IN THE CLAIMS:

Please amend claims 1-10, 13-20, and 22-24, as follows:

- q3
1. (once amended) A pneumatic tire for vehicle wheels, comprising:
 - a radial carcass;
 - a tread band provided with grooves on a surface of the tread band for coming into contact with the ground and situated on a radial outer surface of the carcass;
 - sidewalls and beads for anchorage of the tire on a wheel rim; and
 - a belt structure between the tread band and the carcass;wherein a fiber-reinforced elastomeric intermediate layer is placed between the belt structure and the tread band.
 2. (once amended) The tire of claim 1, wherein the fiber-reinforced elastomeric intermediate layer comprises a compound material and short reinforcing fibers.
 3. (once amended) The tire of claim 2, wherein the short reinforcing fibers comprise an aramid polymer.

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4. (once amended) The tire of claim 2, wherein the short reinforcing fibers are oriented at an angle of substantially 0° with respect to an equatorial plane of the tire.

5. (once amended) The tire of claim 2, wherein the compound material comprises one or more of natural rubber, isoprene rubber, emulsion-polymerized styrene butadiene rubber, solution polymerized styrene butadiene rubber, or butadiene rubber.

6. (once amended) The tire of claim 2, wherein a concentration of the short reinforcing fibers in the compound material is between about 5 phr and 15 phr.

7. (once amended) The tire of claim 2, wherein a concentration of the short reinforcing fibers in the compound material is between about 7 phr and 11 phr.

8. (once amended) The tire of claim 1, wherein the fiber-reinforced elastomeric intermediate layer is incorporated into the tread band.

9. (once amended) The tire of claim 2, wherein the compound material comprises greater than about 50% natural rubber.

10. (once amended) The tire of claim 2, wherein the compound material comprises a concentration of carbon black between about 20 phr and 80 phr.

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a⁴ 13. (once amended) The tire of claim 1, wherein the fiber-reinforced elastomeric intermediate layer has, in cross-section, two edge portions thicker than a central portion.

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B57 14. (once amended) The tire of claim 13, wherein the two edge portions are both between about 25% to 75% thicker than the central portion.

15. (once amended) The tire of claim 13, wherein the two edge portions are both about 33% thicker than the central portion.

16. (once amended) The tire of claim 13, wherein the fiber-reinforced elastomeric intermediate layer has a width, the two edge portions each comprise about 2/7ths of the width, and the central portion comprises a remaining about 3/7ths of the width.

17. (once amended) The tire of claim 1, wherein the belt structure comprises at least one layer of rubberized fabric comprising cords that crisscross each other and are angled with respect to an equatorial plane of the tire.

18. (once amended) The tire of claim 1, wherein the tire does not include a layer of rubberized fabric with longitudinal reinforcing cords lying at an angle of substantially 0° with respect to an equatorial plane of the tire.

19. (once amended) The tire of claim 1, wherein the tire excludes one or more of: a rubber sheet, a 0 degree layer, or an underlayer.

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20. (once amended) The tire of claim 1, wherein the fiber-reinforced elastomeric intermediate layer is an only layer placed between the belt structure and the tread band.

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22. (once amended) The method of claim 21, wherein the method excludes incorporation of one or more of: a rubber sheet, a nylon layer, or an underlayer.

23. (once amended) A method of manufacturing a tire comprising at least one belted layer, a tread band above the at least one belted layer, and a fiber-reinforced elastomeric intermediate layer disposed below the tread band and above the at least one belted layer, comprising the steps of:

providing the at least one belted layer;

extruding the fiber-reinforced elastomeric intermediate layer together with the tread band to form a co-extruded product wherein the fiber-reinforced elastomeric intermediate layer is incorporated into a bottom surface of the tread band; and

disposing the co-extruded product on an upper surface of the at least one belted layer.

24. (once amended) The method of claim 23, wherein the method excludes incorporation of one or more of: a rubber sheet, a 0 degree layer, or an underlayer.

REMARKS

Applicants submit this Preliminary Amendment together with a continuation application under 37 C.F.R. § 1.53(b). Claims 1-24 are pending in this application.

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